

RETURN

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REPORT in the matter of a Formal Investigation into the Causes which led to the British Steamer *Saturnia* touching the ground in the Lower Traverse, River St. Lawrence, on Tuesday, April 28, 1914, held in the Wreck Commissioner's Court, Montreal, on the 4th and 5th days of May, 1914, before Commander Henry St. George Lindsay, R.D., R.N.R., Dominion Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Captain Francis Nash and Captain Joseph Ostens Grey, acting as Assessors.

The British steamship *Saturnia*, official No. 129,489; gross tonnage, 8,611; and owned by the *Saturnia* Steamship Company, Limited, of Glasgow, and engaged in trading between Glasgow and Canadian ports, appears to have been well found and equipped in every respect, and sailed from Glasgow on April 18, 1914, with 300 passengers and a general cargo, and a crew of about 148 all told, and arrived at Father Point, in the gulf of St. Lawrence, on Monday, April 27, about 9.08 p.m., the vessel drawing 18 feet forward and 23 feet 6 inches aft. At 9.24 p.m. the vessel was boarded by Jules Lachance, a special Quebec pilot, and proceeded towards Quebec.

Everything seems to have gone well during the night, the weather being fine and clear, and the ship apparently making good the courses steered, which courses were given by the pilot from time to time. The master was informed by the pilot on his coming on board, that, as the Lower Traverse light vessel was not on her station, he intended to wait for daylight before taking the ship through that channel, to which the master agreed, and shortly after this the latter appears to have left the deck, leaving the pilot in charge. The weather continued fine, and the wind light from southwest, and at 4 a.m. the speed of the ship was reduced, Cape Goose being abeam at 4.08 a.m., and a S. 45 W. course, by compass, was then set. At 4.18 a.m. the engines were ordered full speed ahead by the pilot, and the vessel proceeded towards the Lower Traverse, the tide being flood, and running strong to the south and west, the vessel's speed must have been approximately from 18 to 19 knots over the ground. At 4.40 a.m. the vessel touched the ground, but did not stop, and it was found shortly after the stranding that Nos. 6 and 7 ballast tanks were leaking.

The vessel continued her voyage to Montreal via Quebec, without further incident, and after being discharged, was placed on the floating dock at Montreal, where it was found necessary to make temporary repairs to her bottom plates; the port propeller blades were also found to be bent, and also one blade on starboard propeller.

FINDING.

After carefully considering and reviewing the evidence adduced, the court is of opinion that the stranding of the Steamship *Saturnia*, in the Lower Traverse, river St. Lawrence, on the morning of the 28th of April, was caused by the action of Jules Lachance, the pilot, inasmuch as he appears to have had no confidence in himself as to the manner of navigating the vessel through this channel, and apparently did not make proper use of the usual day marks for safe navigation, and it is the unanimous opinion of the court that the vessel touched the ground on the south side of the channel, and close to the old Lower Traverse block, and this probably accounts for the pilot not seeing the buoy moored off the block, as the vessel must have passed almost over it just before or after striking the ground.

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The court also considers that when in doubt as to his position, and lacking confidence in his ability as a pilot, he should have sent for the master to assist him in the navigation of the vessel.

The court therefore considers that the pilot did not show either ordinary skill or good judgment, in attempting to pass through the Lower Traverse channel under the existing conditions, and therefore suspends the license of Jules Lachance, the pilot, for a period of three months from this date.

In view of the master, David Taylor, knowing that the Lower Traverse lightship was not on her station, and the risks attending the navigating of these narrow channels with a strong flood tide, the court is of opinion that the master ought to have been on deck after passing Cape Goose, and censures him for this negligence.

The fact of the Lower Traverse light vessel not being on her station at the time of the casualty, does not appear to the court to have any bearing on the matter, as the *Saturnia* had passed the position where the light vessel would have been moored, some minutes before the accident, and, had the light vessel been considered necessary for safe navigation, both the master and the pilot were taking undue risks in trying to navigate the Lower Traverse with the full knowledge that the light vessel was not there.

Dated at Ottawa this ninth day of May, 1914.

N. ST. G. LINDSAY,
Dominion Wreck Commissioner.

Concurred in:

FRANCIS NASH,
J. O. GREY,
Assessors.

Read in open court, at Montreal, Quebec, this 11th day of May, 1914.

N. ST. G. LINDSAY,
Dominion Wreck Commissioner.